

YOUR NEW SILK DRESS.

The Price of Its Material Going Up
Just When It Is Becoming
Fashionable Again.

The Failure of Crops in Italy and
France and the Decreased
Production.

The American Market Comparatively Bare
of the Article and the Importations
at Present Very Small.

In the past five years or more silk dress goods have been "out of fashion." All manner and styles of woolen and worsted material have found favor with the "women folks," and except for balls or weddings silk fabrics have been largely neglected. At length, however, fashion has changed, and this change comes at a time when raw or grege silk (which, by the way, is not a raw product) is daily augmenting in price owing to the fact of failure of crops in Italy, France and the east, and the decreased production of the article. The latter circumstance has been owing to the extremely low prices which cocoons have brought for many seasons past and the consequent discouragement of raisers who have abandoned the industry for other pursuits more remunerative.

The October number of the American Silk Journal, speaking of the rise in silk, says: "The month has been an eventful one, and of great importance to silk merchants and manufacturers. When in the beginning of September last, previous indications of stiffening markets, which by close observers of the situation were foreseen, commenced to realize, warnings of still higher prices found few believers among silk manufacturers, who pointed to advances and sudden falls of prices in previous years. But the situation has completely changed, and in many instances is now regarded with amazement bordering on consternation. Manufacturers who, confident of higher prices not being maintained, accepted orders at low prices and did not cover themselves in time, are now confronted by daily advancing quotations, and are consequently finding themselves in the very unenviable situation of being to day forced to pay from 15 to 20 per cent more for their raw material than in August last. Transactions in the home market have, therefore, been animated, and of an aggregate limited only by available stocks, for the latter are very low here, and most silks en route are sold "to arrive."

The effect produced by the officially stated deficiency of the Italian crop this year, of over 30 per cent, has been augmented by authentic reports from Yokohama, that the Japanese crop is less by about 10,000 bales than was at first reported. These facts, coupled with the knowledge that in July, 1888, there were 8,000 bales in stock at Yokohama, while this year there was none left to begin the campaign with, have been the cause of large buying in Asia for European account, and the Japanese were not slow in taking advantage of the situation.

European raw silks have this year maintained higher rates than Japan, but the latter are now close to the former. The famous, or notorious, syndicate disposed of their last holdings early in September, and an immediate advance was the result. According to all reports, European silk manufacturers have received large orders for spring, which accounts for the continuous advance and precludes any probability of a drop in prices for this season.

The prospect for the rest of the campaign, in fact, is a serious deficiency and much higher prices in the coming spring, for already one-half of the Japanese crop has been exported. Almost daily cablegrams are received from abroad announcing further advances. In Italy a number of filatures have stopped work, not being able to pay the high prices for cocoons. A Yokohama dispatch of the 21st inst. says that holders are refusing to sell at present quotations, despite an active demand. The Chinese markets have followed the upward movement, and advanced from four to ten per cent, within a month, with a good demand to support them.

It will be well, therefore, to consider the sources from which the American silk manufacturer derives its supply of raw stock. According to the report of the Silk Association of America, we imported during the year ending June 30, 1889, 37,281 bales, which amount was classified as follows:

Bales. Per cent.

Japan 20,418 54.22

Strictly European 7,380 19.63

Shanghai 5,391 14.48

Hong Kong 4,396 11.89

Asiatic, reshipped from Europe 185 0.49

There is at present in first hands in this country far less than the usual average amount of raw silk. In fact, it may be said that the market is practically bare, while the importations now being received are comparatively small and are nearly all sold "to arrive." At Yokohama at this season of the year the stock on hand for export generally averages about 12,000 bales. At present, it is stated, there are not more than 4,000 bales on hand, with a naturally diminished choice of good sorts.

In Europe all the old silk has been entirely swept out of the market, and consumption is steadily encroaching upon the supply of raw stock usually on hand to meet manufacturers' demands.

It is clear from the foregoing facts that the price of silk goods must be largely advanced from now forward, and the present increase in prices is nothing to what may be anticipated at an early day. Some years since there was considerable agitation in this country for "silk culture," and abundant facts were produced to show that sericulture in the United States could become a leading industry, and the source of respectable income to our wives and daughters. Owing to the high cost of laborer diet, in comparison with the prices paid in Italy and France of from 25 to 30 cents for reeling against 80 cents and \$1 here, as well as from the fact of the low price of silk goods, the agitation and the efforts made toward prosecuting the industry was abandoned or deferred, although it was conceded that we had climates and conditions favorable for the growth of the mulberry tree and the silkworm. The discovery and recent practical application of automatic machinery for reeling has today rendered it practicable to renew this industrial movement and to include silk culture among the sources of wealth for our people.

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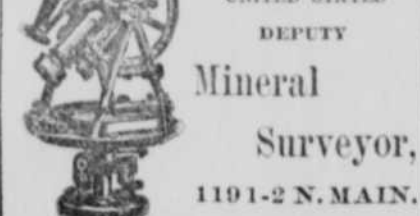
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